

SOME POINTS ON APPLYING FERTILIZER

It has occurred to your editor that some growers have to apply more fertilizer than should be necessary to maintain a medium to high fertility level. Some of these same growers have difficulty getting a nitrate level up to 10 ppm. in spite of frequent applications of fertilizer.

Where is all this fertility going? The plants use relatively little of it and certainly the soil cannot continue to tie up nitrates month after month. A few thoughts along this line may be helpful.

Apply any fertilizer to moist soil only. In the first place this lessens any danger of burning the plant roots. If the soil is dry, water will be deficient in the plants. When fertilizer is applied to this dry soil and watered in, the plants may take in too much in filling up with water. Or the strong solution that is watered down through the soil may actually burn feeder roots. In either case the result may be a check in plant growth resulting in leaf ripening or burning. The check may not even be visible especially if all plants on the place are checked in the same way.

If fertilizer is applied to dry soil and watered in heavily, much of it may be lost through leaching. Dry soil has many small cracks and some not so small. When watering in fertilizers with this condition existing, the tendency is for the water to run through the cracks carrying the soluble fertilizer compounds with it.

Why not try feeding when the soil is moist - possibly the day after watering and sprinkling the fertilizer in lightly. It may seem like more labor but more value will come from the feeding, less feed will be required and there will be a lot less chance of injury. This goes for any crop.

There are some who still feed organic fertilizers during the winter and wonder why their nitrate levels stay so low. Most organic forms of nitrogen are available to plants only after soil bacteria have worked them over. These bacteria work very slowly during the winter. The result is that organic nitrogen applied during the winter may not be available to plants until spring and warmer weather. If organic nitrogen has been fed heavily during the winter, too much may come available at once in the spring. This would be especially true if the soil is to be sterilized and used for growing on young plants.

To have the nitrates available when they are fed, use inorganic forms of nitrogen during the winter and save the organic for warmer weather.

Your editor,

